DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 057 SP 038 386

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TITLE Volunteer New Teacher Program.
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Preservice Teachers; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Qualifications; Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

This project investigated the significance of preservice teachers' experiences and the residual effects of those experiences, noting how a volunteer new teacher program had assisted preservice teachers and examining the effects of participation in special programs. Surveys were sent to 122 alumni of Northeastern Illinois University. Respondents were teachers who had attended the Beginning Teacher Meetings, teachers who had received materials from the Beginning Teacher Meetings but had not participated regularly, and preservice teachers who had participated in the university's apprenticeship program in local school districts. The survey examined respondents' background, their personal and professional competence, and the impact of the university's preservice teacher education program. A total of 38 usable surveys were returned. Results indicated that participants were teaching, successful, and enjoying their chosen profession. The university's program positively affected them, prepared them to be good teachers, and contributed to their overall success. Respondents believed that the volunteer new teacher program provided invaluable services. The survey instrument is appended. (SM)

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ED 429 057

# Volunteer New Teacher Program

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SP038386

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Running head: VOLUNTEER

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## Abstract

**Volunteer New Teacher Program**

**The purposes of this project were to provide data on the significance of the preservice teachers' experiences, their residual effects, and how the volunteer new teacher program had assisted them. Surveys were sent to 122 Northeastern Alumni. It attempted to find out about teachers' teaching experiences and how they were faring. The results indicated that they are teaching, successful, and enjoying their chosen profession. The university's program did positively impact them, and the volunteer new teacher program does provide invaluable services and has a needed place in teacher education programs.**

## VOLUNTEER NEW TEACHER PROGRAM

The purposes of this project were to provide data on the significance of the preservice teachers experiences, whether these experiences had any residual effects, and how the volunteer new teacher program had assisted them.

### Research

The current body of research has grown as colleges, universities, and professional organizations began to view the impact of course work, field based experiences, mentor programs, and new teacher programs on its graduates. The main thrusts have been how to prepare the novice for the real world of teaching. In May 1994 the National Center for Education Statistics produced a survey that highlighted teachers who left, moved, or remained in education. Highlights from this survey may be viewed in the Appendix. [1]

Educators are continually searching for best practices to address attributes, attitudes, and ways to influence change on teachers. In 1984, Veenman identified problems beginning teachers experienced, and since then preservice educators have attempted to transmit these concerns to their students. Weinstein (1988)[2] found that preservice students tended to underestimate these concerns and think "it will not happen to them."

Assessing the best ways to teach future teachers is like the chicken and the egg question: Which comes first, experience or knowledge? Johnston (1994) made a strong case that "teacher education programs have an important role in developing within student teachers' images of good teaching; these images may well contain elements which stress creativity and the need for teachers to respond to individual

student needs by developing innovative programs and materials. (p.206)".[3] She continued by reminding educators that they must heed the way our students perceive their roles and the expectations of the schools. We should take their experiences and make them aware of the best ways to utilize them.

A survey of experienced teachers by Bercik and Blair-Larsen (1990) attested to the fact that induction programs for new teachers is essential. They found, however, it was crucial that a systematic means of providing information to these individuals be utilized. "If education is to attract qualified personnel who will not become disenchanted in their first years, educators must develop teacher induction programs that function as a source of continual professional development. (p. 28)".[4] During the Fall 1994, 51 first year teachers from across the United States were brought together by the Sallie Mae Corporation to assess their challenges and experiences. These individuals cited their school administrator as critical and praised their induction and mentor programs. They felt these activities "aimed at easing the transition from student or intern teacher to professional. (p. 9)." [5]

## Procedures

Surveys were sent to 122 Northeastern Alumni. The list of individuals who received this survey involved the following:

- teachers who had attended the Beginning Teacher Meetings;
- teachers who had received materials from the Beginning Teacher Meetings, but had not participated on a regular basis; and
- students who had participated in the Apprenticeship Program in East Maine District 63 and Glen Grove School, District 34.

These individuals were sent a letter in April requesting return of the survey by mid May. This deadline was established to avoid the crunch of schools' closing, testing schedules, and spring breaks. Each individual received the following items:

- introductory letter (see Appendix Two);
- questionnaire and NCS response guide (see Appendix Three);
- postage paid return envelope; and
- one tea bag.

Considering the length and knowledge of return rates on surveys, the added incentive of a "warm spot of tea" was used.

Discussion

The survey was developed out of a composite of several documents. It was adapted from one used by this researcher several years ago and one compiled by Donovan Cook, Washburne University, Topeka, Kansas.[6] Cook had used this survey as a follow-up for students attending Washburne to "reflect on what we do and how we may refine the program."

The responses were received over the next several months with a postcard reminder sent to the recipients. Of the 122 sent, 24 envelopes were returned as "not deliverable". Three of the respondents called "to chat", with one indicating they were not teaching due to family responsibilities. One called to share that he was still doing part-time teaching at a parochial school and sharing in family caretaking responsibilities. The third, who was in the first cohort of beginning teachers, called to say that all was going along quite well. She was starting graduate school after five years in teaching, and had been named "teacher of the year" at her

school. A final total of 38 [39%] responses were received. This is not the highest return rate number, but it was within the range of thirty per cent as received on most surveys. The three phone calls were counted in the overall response rate but were not included in the basic information collated hereafter because they did not respond to each of the issues on the survey. Of the remaining 35 responding to the formal questionnaire, their school status involved four in a parochial setting, eight in the suburbs, twenty in the city, and three with no indication. The following background information was received:

- *Sex:* 29 female [83%]; 4 male [11%]; 2 no indication [6%]
- *Started teaching:* 1989 = 2 [6%]; 1990 = 2 [3%]; 1991 = 2 [6%]; 1992 = 1 [3%]; 1993 = 14 [40%]; 1994 = 5 [14%]; 1995 = 5 [14%]; no year indicated = 5 [14%]
- *Teaching level:* Preschool = 2 [6%]; Kindergarten = 2 [6%]; Grades 1 - 3 = 11 [31%]; 4 - 6 = 5 [14%]; 5 - 8 = 5 [14%]; 9 - 12 = 6 [17%]; and no level indicated = 4 [12%]

Issues relative to the impact of Northeastern's program were individually assessed and the remainder of the comments and responses are presently undergoing categorization and statistical analysis. Items specific to the program and the preservice component involved the following questions: Northeastern prepared me to be a good teacher; Northeastern contributed to my success as a teacher; First year success is a result of several items, with three of the items involving the Glen Grove, Apprenticeship, and Beginning Teacher Programs. As will be evidenced by the following information, the students who believe that Northeastern prepared them

to be a good teacher involved 27 of the 35 respondents who strongly agree and agree. The remaining 8 were neutral, disagree or strongly disagree. The number [29/35] increased when asked if they felt the university program contributed to their success. When asked if either of the special programs [#63 and 34] contributed to their success, the response from this group was minimal. Only three involved in these projects responded.

An item dealing with success being reflective of Northeastern's Beginning Teacher Program resulted in more than half [22 / 35] stating it was either extremely important [6], important [8], or moderately important [8].

The following chart will show the actual breakdown and number of respondents, percentages, and the related item numbers:

| Question | SA / % | A / % | N / % | D/ % | SD/% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 = | 9 / 25 | 18 / 51 | 4 / 12 | 3 / 9 | 1 / 3 |
| 19 = | 10 / 29 | 19 / 54 | 4 / 12 | 1 / 3 | 1 / 3 |
| 57 = | 3 / 9 | | 32 = Not applicable / 91% | | |
| 58 = | 1 / 3 | | 34 = Not applicable / 97% | | |
| | Extremely | Important | Moderately | Not | NA |
| 59 = | 6 / 17 | 8 / 23 | 8 / 23 | 6 / 17 | 7 / 20 |

## Implications

Based on this information it may be determined that the majority of the alumnae believe that Northeastern did, in fact, prepare them to be good teachers and

contributed to their overall success. Further item analysis will have to occur to identify the specific areas, types of instructional strategies and activities utilized, and curricular materials being used. The areas and problems they encountered during their first year relative to students, motivation issues, knowledge of subject matter, and other personnel will be addressed in future articles. This is essential if Northeastern's program is to be examined to show if it has the qualities necessary for the novice teachers to survive in the real world of teaching.

A second purpose of this survey was to address those individuals participating in the special programs. Since there was minimal response by this group, no judgements may be ascertained and future discussions must be had to decide how this data will be obtained. As each year of the program comes to closure students respond positively, but it is crucial to have them understand we must have feedback several years after the fact to judge its impact.

A third purpose involved how the volunteer new teacher program assisted its participants. Based on the response of this group, it is serving a definite purpose. Although the number is not great, one may not discount its impact. The key factor is that it is volunteer, involves their time, and does relate to issues of significance to its participants. The individual responses to how Northeastern may assist students in their professional development is presently being viewed, but some of the comments dealt specifically with the New Teacher Program. Several of the statements indicated, "I think a new teachers meeting once a month is great. Please continue with this program." "I used to go to Northeastern's new teachers' conferences where teachers told their experiences and possible solutions. It was

great!" "Be available, and do what you are already doing."

## Conclusions / Recommendations

This survey attempted to find out about teachers' teaching experiences and how they were faring in the field. The results indicated that they are teaching, successful, and enjoying their chosen profession. The university's program did impact them in a positive manner, and the volunteer new teacher program does provide an invaluable service and have a place in its teacher education program.

It is important that the remainder of the survey document be analyzed and placed into perspective with the resulting data. It will add to the knowledge base of the programs and the overall needs for future teachers. These implications may be built into the ongoing new teacher program and enhance the future of the methods courses.

These results will have long range effects on the future of other institutions as they begin to struggle with the best ways to implement programs and reach their teacher graduates. This sample shows that new teacher programs do positively influence the novice. Future studies will need to be conducted on graduates, and the extent of the questionnaire may need to be limited to assure better response rates.

## Footnotes

[1]U.S. Department of Education. (May 1994). Characteristics of stayers, movers, and leavers: Results from the teacher follow-up survey: 1991-92. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. NCES 94-337.

[2]Weinstein, C. (1988). Preservice teachers' expectations about their first year of teaching. Teaching & Teacher Education, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp 31 - 40, Great Britain.

[3]Johnston, S. (1994). Experience is the best teacher; Or is it? An analysis of the role of experience in learning in teach. Journal of Teacher Education, May-June 1994, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp 199 - 208.

[4]Bercik, J.T. & Blair-Larsen, S. (1990). A survey of the induction year: Perceptions of the experienced educator. Illinois School Research and Development, Vol. 27, No. 4, Fall 1990, pp 20 - 29.

[5]SallieMae Symposium Report. (1995). Symposium on quality education. Corporate Communications, Washington, DC.

[6]Cook, D.W. (1994). The first year follow-up study. Presentation at Eastern Educational Research Association, 1995.

# Appendix One

## Highlights

- The attrition rate from the teaching profession between school years 1990-91 and 1991-92 was 5.1 percent in public schools and 12.3 percent in private schools. These attrition rates do not differ from the attrition rates of 5.6 percent in public schools and 12.7 percent in private schools between school years 1987-88 and 1988-89 (table 1).

- The rate at which public school teachers of general education subjects left the profession varied little by field. Science and math teachers, in particular, were no more likely to leave the teaching profession than teachers of other general education subjects such as English, reading, and social studies (table 1).

- Teacher attrition varied by teacher's age. The rate for teachers in the 50 or more age category was 14.3 percent for public school teachers and 15.2 for private school teachers; the rates in the less than 30 age category were 7.5 and 18.9 percent for public and private teachers respectively. In the 40 to 49 age category, the attrition rate was 2.9 percent for public school teachers and 6.3 for private teachers (table 2).

- Almost all public school teachers who changed schools between school years 1990-91 and 1991-92 transferred to other public schools (94.3 percent); a little over half (52.8 percent) of the private school teachers in 1990-91 who changed schools stayed in private schools (47.2 percent transferred to public schools) (table 7).

- Among former public school teachers, 18.6 percent cited homemaking and/or child rearing as their primary occupational status in 1991-92. Another 33.3 percent said that they were retired. Among former private school teachers, 35.8 percent said that they were working in an occupation outside of elementary or secondary education; another 19.3 percent said that they were engaged in homemaking and/or child rearing; less than 10 percent of former private school teachers said that they were retired (table 8).

- The percentage of public school teachers who were retired in the followup year increased from about one-fourth in 1987-88 to one-third in 1990-91 (table 8).

- Among teachers who left the teaching profession between 1990-91 and 1991-92, 14.7 percent of public school teachers and 16.1 percent of private school teachers expect to return to teaching in any of grades K through 12 in school year 1992-93 (table 11).

- Among teachers who stayed in the same school between school years 1990-91 and 1991-92, 53.4 percent of public and 58.0 percent of private school teachers felt that "providing higher salaries or better fringe benefits" is the most effective step that schools might take to encourage teachers to remain in teaching (tables 14 and 15). However, among former public school teachers who cited "dissatisfaction with teaching as a career" as one of their main reasons for leaving the profession, 0.7

percent cited "poor salary" as their main area of dissatisfaction, while 24.9 percent cited "inadequate support from the administration" as their main area of dissatisfaction (table 12).

# Appendix Two

**interoffice**
MEMORANDUM

to: **Northeastern Illinois University Alumnae**
from: **Dr. Janet T. Bercik**
subject: *Teaching Survey / Return by MAY 15!*
date: **September 27, 1996**

**It certainly seems like a long time has passed since last I communicated with each of you. As you can see from the enclosure I am asking for your help and assistance. Since this is a comprehensive questionnaire, one that will be invaluable for future programs, I thought a "wee spot" of refreshment would make you amenable to completing the forms. A bribe? No! Consider this an enhancement, so boil some water and have a cup of hot tea on me.**

**Your thoughts and comments about your teaching experiences to date, and how your are faring is important to me. As usual I am seeking to improve the field component and find ways to advance new teachers.**

**I received a mini grant from the Illinois Association of Teacher Educators to research this information and will present it, in the Fall, to college educators from Illinois and Indiana. If you want a copy of the results, let me know and I'll mail it to you. I also will write an article for the IATE magazine referencing the results.**

**I have enclosed an NCS form to record your responses and an envelope to return it. All you need is a number two pencil, a half hour, and your cup of hot tea.**

**I realize your time is precious as school is coming to a close, so please, take a few minutes and answer this survey today and help me. Your thoughts and ideas count! You will help improve not only what we do at Northeastern, but what may be done throughout the state. Thank you for your time and help!**

**PS An important, maybe "selfish" reason, is to hear how you are doing, where you are, and what's happening.**

**jtb/survey.wpd96**

# Appendix Three

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**On the back side of the NCS indicate the following:**

Name: Code in city or suburb / public, private or parochial
Sex: Female / Male
Birth / Date: Year started teaching
Identification Number: Teaching level based on one of the following:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Preschool | = | 01 |
| Kindergarten | = | 02 |
| 1, 2, or 3 | = | 03 |
| 4, 5, or 6 | = | 04 |
| 5 - 8 | = | 05 |
| 9 - 12 | = | 06 |

## PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

**After reading the following statements, indicate your level of agreement:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | = | Strongly agree |
| B | = | Agree |
| C | = | Neutral |
| D | = | Disagree |
| E | = | Strongly disagree |

1. I have the necessary subject matter background (knowledge and skills) in the area(s) that I teach.

2. I am able to communicate positively and professionally with my colleagues.

3. I model appropriate personal behaviors (self control, enthusiasm, tolerance) and desirable educational traits (intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, decision-making skills).

4. I understand how my students learn and I adapt my instruction to meet their developmental and individual needs.

5. I know my students well enough and maintain appropriately high expectations.

A = Strongly agree
B = Agree
C = Neutral
D = Disagree
E = Strongly disagree

6. I have a positive rapport with my students.

7. I reflect on the effectiveness of my teaching.

8. I transmit teaching content to students at their level of understanding.

9. I plan thorough, well organized lessons.

10. I adapt instruction to meet the affective, intellectual, and physical needs of my students.

11. I adapt instruction to meet the social and cultural needs of my students.

12. I use a variety of instructional materials and resources (speakers, field trips, audio tapes, films, filmstrips, models, computer software, etc.).

13. I manage instructional time well.

14. I consistently monitor student progress, provide feedback, and reteach when needed.

15. I design, use and interpret evaluative devices well.

16. I manage students' behavior well.

17. The atmosphere in my classroom is positive (a nurturing and non-threatening atmosphere with fairness and mutual respect).

18. NEIU prepared me to be a good teacher.

19. NEIU contributed to my success as a teacher.

**How often do you use the following instructional strategies / activities in your teaching? Rate as follows:**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | = | Daily | D | = | Occasionally |
| B | = | Weekly | E | = | Never |
| C | = | Monthly | | | |

20. Reading from text
21. Workbook activities
22. Inquiry/discovery learning
23. Computers
24. Games
25. Speakers
26. Lab work/investigations
27. Thematic learning units
28. Role playing
29. Individual seat work
30. Worksheet activities
31. Discussions
32. AV/films
33. Lecture/demonstration
34. Cooperative learning groups
35. Field trips
36. Reading workshop
37. Competitions/contests
38. Learning centers

**How frequently do you use the following <u>curricular materials</u> in your teaching? Rate as above.**

39. Text materials/workbooks/worksheets
40. Curriculum guides
41. Primary sources (e g , interviews, diary entries)
42. Personally developed lessons/units
43. Staff development programs
44. Library (e.g., AV materials, computer software, literature)
45. Manipulative materials
46. Lab work/investigations

**First year success is a result of many things. Indicate the importance of the following factors that MAY HAVE or DID contribute to your success.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | = | Extremely important |
| B | = | Important |
| C | = | Moderately important |
| D | = | Not important |
| E | = | Not applicable |

47. Principal

48. Assistant principal

49. Curriculum coordinator

50. Department chair

51. Designated mentor teacher

52. Teaching colleague

53. Former cooperating teacher

54. Professor

55. Clinical experience

56. Student teaching

57. Experiences from the Glen Grove Program

58. Experiences from the District 63 Apprenticeship Program

59. NEIU's Beginning Teacher Program

**Indicate how much of a problem you had with these issues during your first year based on the following rating scale:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | = | Very serious problem |
| B | = | Serious problem |
| C | = | Moderate problem |
| D | = | Small problem |
| E | = | No problem at all |

60. Evaluating students' work

61. Effectively using different teaching methods

62. Maintaining discipline

63. Dealing with individual differences

64. Motivating students

65. Figuring out why students are having difficulties with assignments

66. Knowledge of subject matter

67. Dealing with insufficient materials and supplies

68. Determining students' achievement level

69. Dealing with lack of supplementary materials that enrich the curriculum

70. Dealing with the clerical work

71. Dealing with principal imposed constraints

72. Effectively responding to students' misbehavior

73. Dealing with work load

74. Getting along with colleagues

75. Establishing and enforcing class rules and procedures

76. Being accepted by students

77. Organizing class assignments and activities

78. Relating to parents

79. Reteaching students who do not comprehend the material the first time around

80. Improving academic performance of low-achievers/under-achievers

81. Children leaving to go to "specials": pull-outs, etc.

82. Getting students to work quietly during seatwork time

83. Dealing with school activities that take time away from the instructional program

84. Planning lessons and units

85. Relating to administrators

86. Being aware of and following school policies

87. Adapting curricula and instruction to needs of slow learners

88. Teaching culturally and linguistically different students

89. Parent-teacher conferences

90. Teaming with other teachers

91. Did you substitute teach before your contracted teaching position?

A = 5+ years
B = 4 years
C = 3-2 years
D = 1 year
E = 0